

Jan. 19, '76.

Dear Daw Khin Mya,

I received your airletter and your long registered letter dealing with the vipassana questions. I do appreciate all your letters, because the subject is Dhamma. These letters bring up many points we can discuss, and I think it best to talk about one or two points at a time, and then I will continue in following letters. The reason is that I am now writing talks on Cetasika, and I am just in the middle of vedanā, that leaves 50 more cetasikas to write about. You can imagine that this will take a long time. But in between I enjoy it very much to write to you. Point 1: trying to concentrate on walking. This is not satipatthana. But in order to go into this, I would like to say something again about the difference between concept (paññatti) and reality (paramattha dhamma). In theory we know that person, self are concepts, and that nāmas and rūpas are realities. But what are we doing in practice? Are we not taking concepts for realities?

We are used to 'joining' many nāmas and rūpas together into a 'whole', a story, a concept, instead of experiencing realities as they appear one at a time. Don't we confuse doorways? Don't we join seeing and visible object together, so that we know only a concept, an idea we (that we have in our mind) of seeing? It is vipassanā if sati can be aware of one reality at a time, when it appears. Seeing is only seeing, the experience of visible object, it does not see a person or thing in visible object. Visible object appears through the eyes, when the eyes are closed it does not appear, when we open them, there is visible object. It is a different citta which thinks about person. The person (which is seen) is not a reality, it is a concept, a 'whole'. The thinking, however, is real. It is natural that we think of concepts, and the thinking has also a characteristic which can be known different from seeing. They are different characteristics. Also seeing and visible object have different characteristics. Seeing is the experience of visible object, it experiences, it knows, it ~~only~~ experiences only visible object; it cannot think. Seeing cannot be seen, but sati can be aware of seeing when it appears, as just that kind of experience. We ~~cannot~~ cannot concentrate on seeing, put our mind on seeing. This is not possible, it all depends on sati of what object it is aware, and sati is anatta. We could never choose a reality or try to concentrate, because then there is only thinking of concepts, and no knowledge of a reality. Also no detachment from self, it is self who then tries to regulate sati.

Visible object does not know anything, it is different from seeing, it appears ~~through the~~; do we have to think of visible object or of the eyes? It appears now, no need to think. Sati can be aware of it when it appears. We cannot choose the object of sati. Re Pañña developed in vipassana is very precise realities are known as they appear one at a time, through each doorway, no joining together of seeing and visible object, or seeing and thinking. As soon as there is a mass of realities, a whole, there is a concept again, but, the thinking of a concept is a reality which can be known. The thinking is real, not the concept.

I am walking: this is in the sutta, but, it is

meant. ... when walking contemplative to ... the  
body, no self in the body. Better to say, "It",  
I talk about this. Also when walking there are many  
namas and rupas: seeing, visible object, hardness,  
experience of hardness, quite naturally. Sati can now  
and then for a moment be aware of realities, one at  
a time, no joining of namas and rupas. Walking is  
not a reality, only a concept, steps are, feet, all  
these are concepts, wholes, stories, we may think of.  
Only thinking is real, not the concept. In some centers  
they make people do exercises of walking. That is self  
who tries to select namas and rupas, tries to concen-  
trate. Then only concepts are known, not realities as  
they appear, because of their own conditions, not  
because we want to make this or that reality appear,  
this is impossible. Sati is only one moment, now and  
then, it slips in, then many moments no sati. If we  
try again to have long moments it is impossible, self  
again which tries to control and it is not the right  
sati. If we say: anicca, it is only a word, a concept.  
Anicca cannot be realised if the other stages before  
that stage of vipassana have not been realised yet.

First the difference should be known between nama and  
rupa, not by thinking about it, but through development  
of pañña.